

MARCH 2017 NEWSLETTER

The Studio & Santa Cruz Ballet Theatre | partners in excellence serving Santa Cruz County for over 30 years
Robert Kelley and Diane Cypher, Artistic Directors | Sandy Nelson, Administrative Manager | Mark Swan, SCBT Board President

STUDENT DEMONSTRATION JUNE 3

All of our Preparatory Ballet and Professional Training Program students are invited to participate in our annual Student Demonstration. The event showcases the progress made during the year, and does not feature costumes or choreographed dances, but instead it features the hard-earned technical progress of our students. Santa Cruz Ballet Theatre Senior Company dancers will also present the annual **EMERGING CHOREOGRAPHERS SHOWCASE** in conjunction with the Student Demonstration. This year, our young choreographers will present new pieces choreographed by Carolyn Jones and Flora Chatwin. It's always exciting to see what today's young minds create — these are quite possibly the choreographers of tomorrow.

This year's event will be presented at the Colligan Theater on the Tannery Arts Center campus, which is a much smaller venue than we've used in the past. Each participating student receives 2 complimentary tickets. This year it is imperative that the tickets be picked up ahead of time. The theater will only hold very few extra audience members, so tickets not picked up by May 26 will be sold as extra tickets. Patrons wishing to purchase additional tickets, please put your order in with Sandy starting May 15. If there are seats available after comp tickets are retrieved May 26, additional tickets will be available on a first-come, first-served basis, based on the date the tickets were reserved. To ensure your seats

PICK UP YOUR 2 COMPLIMENTARY TICKETS BY MAY 26

IN CONCERT TICKETS ON SALE NOW

Don't miss this spring's In Concert presentation, featuring classical ballet, contemporary ballet and modern ballet idioms. A very special treat this year is a live performance by a string quartet, directed by our Music Director Pamela Martin. The string quartet will play Jerome Begin's original score commissioned for Robert Kelley's "Turbulent Passages," featuring the talents of the Senior Company dancers. Jerome and Robert collaborated several times between the years of 1998 and 2001, but this is their first collaborative effort in recent years. Jerome is known for his

edgy modern compositions, as Robert is known for his contemporary take on classical ballet. Don't miss this extraordinary new creation!

Also on the program will be the classic "Paquita" with music by Minkus. See our wonderful Senior Company dancers show off their classical technique with a Spanish flair. A premiere by alumnus Nahshon Marden to a new score by Max Rico showcase the modern abilities of our dancers. The return of guest choreographer Eva Stone's fun romp "End of a Year" showcases the wit and ability of both Ms. Stone and our dancers. The Peasant Pas de Deux from "Giselle" is a romantic offering featuring the up-and-coming talents of three of our youngest Senior Company dancers. Rounding out the program will be performances by the Junior and Petite Companies.

Click here to purchase tickets online:

www.cabrillovapa.com



Gabbi Kamalani and Emerson Moose in the "Paquita" Pas de Deux, surrounded by the corps de ballet. Gabbi is heading off to Tufts University School of Medicine to continue her pursuit of a degree in Medicine begun at Stanford University. Emerson is currently dancing with the Royal Danish Ballet in Copenhagen. Archival photo by Lynne Owen.

*The 2012 cast
of Eva Stone's
"End of a Year."
Photo by
Lynne Owen*



IN PRAISE OF SAN FRANCISCO BALLET

by Diane Cypher

We are so very lucky to live in such close proximity to the best ballet company in the country. Yes, I truly believe San Francisco Ballet has the best dancers and repertoire in the U.S. The dancers' talents are simply extraordinary; each and every dancer sports uniformly excellent technical and artistic ability, and this accomplishment is across the board: from the corps de ballet all the way up to the principal dancers. These professionals are virtuosic in all forms of ballet, from the great classics to the inventions of the newest choreographers in the world.

THE REPERTOIRE danced by the company showcases also all manner of choreography, which is great for the dancers and audience alike. From time-honored romantic ballets like "Giselle" and the classic "Swan Lake" to story ballets like "Cinderella," sometimes reworked inventively by the likes of Christopher Wheeldon or Alexei Ratmansky, to the lovely and thought-provoking works of resident Helgi Tomasson and Yuri Possokov. And then there are the premieres! Artistic Director Helgi Tomasson has an incredible eye for talent, both choreographic and dancerly ability. New works in recent memory by Liam Scarlett, William Forsythe, Wayne McGregor and Renato Zanella are events I will never forget. (Due to our RDA Adjudication, I missed the Jiří Bubeníček premiere in Program I, which I heard was superb.)

If you have not seen any SFB performances yet this season, GET TICKETS NOW. Do not delay! SCBT company dancers should go to Saturday evening performances so as not to disrupt your own rehearsal schedule. I will almost always let you out by 5:30 if you are scheduled for rehearsal until 6:00 pm. I realize it's difficult to race up to the city to see the ballet, but it is completely worth it! Saturday evenings is when I go to see them, so that my rehearsal schedule is not disrupted. (Get that? My rehearsal schedule is the same as yours.) And the best thing for a tight budget is Standing Room seats, which can be purchased 1 hour before performances for a nominal fee. Standing is not too bad for any ballet; I would only not recommend it for the epic length of "Sleeping Beauty," which they are not doing this season.

San Francisco Ballet sports an excellent orchestra, which tackles every challenge with aplomb. Designers hired for set, costume and lighting design are world-class. Again, Helgi knows what to program to get the most out of his team, and he hires outside designers when the need arises, or the choreographer requires it. His artistic sensibility when choosing programs is out of this world. There is nothing better for a Balanchine fanatic than to see an entire evening of ballets by the great master. He is one of my favorite choreographers, partially because I enjoyed dancing his ballets so much. Helgi puts it all together in a manner that is unrivaled. Now I'll have to go see Dutch National Ballet, or Paris Opera Ballet, or Royal Danish Ballet (which I should see, since our alumnus Emerson Moose dances there now) to compare. I already know that the Kirov, Bolshoi, ABT and Royal Ballets don't hold a candle to SFB — at least in my opinion.

So back to my favorite subject: the dancers. Oh my, what a wealth of talent, ability, commitment, artistry, nuance! They really are quite something. Some of my favorites ...

New corps de ballet dancer **Natasha Sheehan** is a charming addition to the company this season. I can't wait to watch her blossom over the next few years.

Joseph Walsh! The brother-in-law of our alumna Melody Mennite is one of the most exquisite male dancers dancing today. This man has it all: he is gorgeous, talented and a terrific performer. His wife **Lauren Strongin** is also stunning. Currently a soloist with the company, she also came from Houston Ballet. I love her delicate femininity, something sometimes difficult to find in female dancers today.

The roster of Principal female dancers is without parallel in any company in the world right now, or for any company at any time in the world as far as I know. Longtime audience favorite, the sublime **Yuan Yuan Tan**, is unrivaled in her unique talents and beauty. Who knew someone with such long and lean legs and feet could achieve such remarkable technical prowess? She is beautiful in everything she dances. The petite Russian phenomenon **Maria Kotchetkova** stuns in everything she touches as well. She seems so delicate, and yet she can burst out with amazing power and speed. **Doris Andre** is another of my favorites, also — like Lauren Strongin — because she combines excellent technique with a refined femininity and artistic subtlety. **Francis Chung** can do anything and play any role, and the veteran **Lorena Feijoo** does *ferocious* and can act like no other woman alive today. The best "Don Quixote" I ever saw was danced by her and longtime partner Joan Boada (now retired). No technical feat is beyond **Vanessa Zahorian**, who continues to amaze in everything she dances. Newly promoted **Sasha De Sola** makes even the most unforgiving choreography look easy (I'm remembering her variation in "Raymonda Variations" here), and has a lovely expansive quality about her dancing.

< continued on next page >

IN PRAISE OF SFB

continued from previous page

Mathilde Froustey is clearly a French find, with oodles of frothy joy and ease in her dancing. She also has a lovely femininity about her. I've not seen **Sarah Van Patten** dance in several seasons, but remember her being lovely as the Queen of the Dryads in "Don Quixote" and hope to see more of her this season.

But my absolute favorite female at SFB is the glorious **Sofiane Sylve**. Maybe I relate to her because she's tall, but she is my hands-down favorite OF ALL TIME world-class ballerina. I could watch her dance the principal in "Diamonds" any day (hopefully with **Tiit Helimets** the best prince/cavalier ever!); I could watch her dance Forsythe's choreography forever; I could watch her interpretation of Myrtha, Queen of the Wilis in "Giselle" over and over again (with Tiit as Albrecht!), and have. She constantly amazes and delights me. She is one of those rare dancers who makes everything look effortless. Well, they all do, but when she danced "Underskin" by Zanella I was shocked at what she pulled off *without calling attention to it*. Most of the audience around me had no idea the magnitude of what she had just done.

Okay, back to the other, *regular* dancers. I hope soloist **James Sofranko** continues to dance forever, because he is stunning in contemporary work. One of my favorite moments on the War Memorial Opera House stage in recent years was a duet he and **Hansuke Yamamoto** danced opposite a beautiful pas de deux featuring Yuan Yuan Tan in a Liam Scarlett premiere. See what I mean? A male duet took my eyes off of Yuan Yuan. How is that possible? The wealth of the soloists, male and female is rich at SFB. All standouts. I look forward to seeing them dance more and more over the next few years and watching their development as artists.

Now on to my almost favorite subject: the male Principals. Did I mention Joe Walsh? There is something so special required of a man in ballet. He has to be physically off the charts in strength, stamina, flexibility and coordination, but what is so truly astonishing at SFB is the depth of the artistry of the men. They are all special. **Vitor Luiz** has caught my eye in recent seasons, with his stellar performances in both classical and contemporary choreography. If you watched him in rehearsal on World Ballet Day, he also seems like the consummate partner, like Tiit, like Joseph, like **Carlos Quenedit**. Of course, I've not got their hands on me, but that's what it looks like. They truly care about their ballerinas and their partnering skills are off the charts. Talking about amazing partners, I want to see **Luke Ingham** in everything. Like Tiit, like Joseph, he has virtuosic technique, *and* is an amazing actor. Plus, he is gorgeous; that never hurts. Control is what I think of when I remember **Jaime Garcia Castilla** dancing in "Onegin." There is something especially beautiful about a man who can carry off a difficult adagio seamlessly. Think Sigfried's end of Act I adagio before he goes out to hunt

swans. Stunning. (Tiit!) In "Onegin" I felt the pain of Lensky as Jaime completed his double back-attitude pirouettes and landed precisely in arabesque plié as though it were nothing. He had the delicacy of the most accomplished female ballerina, yet the strength of body and character to make me believe in the role he was playing. Recently promoted **Carlo Di Lanno** is another standout. He has beautiful line and great commitment. He's been good in everything, and I've seen a lot of him lately. Hooray for male dancers!

Back to the mortals, there is so much talent in the corps de ballet it's worth mentioning. Standouts to me are **Emma Rubinowitz** who I remember from her years as a student with City Ballet School at RDA. She is a great mover and really good in everything I've seen her in. **Myles Thatcher** has proven to be quite the choreographer, and I enjoy watching his commitment on stage as a dancer. Again, here Helgi will most definitely prove his ability to see and nurture talent. He's tapped Myles to choreograph pieces along the way, and finally featured a pas de deux choreographed by him for this year's gala, which is an honor. Look for great things to come out of this young man. **Steven Morse** has been given bigger and bigger things to dance the last couple of years, always good choices. Watch for him as well. **Max Cauthorn** has recently been given the opportunity to dance a leading role in Liam Scarlett's "Frankenstein" which otherwise features principals Joseph Walsh and Aaron Robison (I've not seen Aaron yet, but he stood out in class on the World Ballet Day footage — can't wait to see him onstage). Huh? A corps boy dancing a leading role, with Lauren Strongin no less. Lucky chap. If Liam's instincts are anything like Helgi's this is a star in the making. Let's all look forward to seeing what he develops into. And, last but certainly not least, our friend from RDA, **John Paul Simoens**, who was last seen by me in recent seasons in both "Swimmer" and partnering Vanessa Zahorian! Go, John Paul!

If this isn't enough to inspire you to go — immediately — to see San Francisco Ballet, I don't know what will. No matter what program you choose, you will surely be delighted and transported. This is the special thing the arts can do for us. Support them any way you can, and really and truly, San Francisco Ballet is the best there is. Go!

PARENT OBSERVATION WEEK

March 27-April 1

Parents and friends are invited to watch classes all week. Please arrive on time and stay for the entire lesson, or come and go quietly, so as not to disrupt the concentration and progress of the class. Supervise any young children. Recording devices of any kind are not allowed as they distract the students. Thank you for your cooperation.

We hope you can make it!